Major Stakeholders Review

The following pages list the vested stakeholders in the Tulare Unit. Each stakeholder has their own reasons for wanting fuel reduction projects. It may be to increase grazing capacity, make their land more usable for other reasons, or to protect their investments from an uncontrolled fire.

Nature used to keep the forests and rangelands in check with fire. But for over 130 years we have actively suppressed and extinguished these wildfires. This has consequently increased the accumulation of fuels and gradually replaced the once grasslands with brush fields. San Joaquin Air Pollution District has levied a $5.00 an acre smoke mitigation fee that make VMP burns very expensive, and has hindered current fuel reduction projects. Proposition 40 funds added to the VMP program should allow VMP projects to progress again. We are hoping to try some mastication, and mechanical fuels treatments which traditionally have been under utilized in the Tulare Unit.

There are several ways we can balance the needs for an ecological environment and improve fire safety. Listed below are some of the ways we can obtain our objectives.

- Work with Fish and Game, U.S. Forest Service, BLM and other stakeholders in implementing fuel modification projects, and to keep fire/ flooding damages to a minimum.
- Continue with VMP projects for fuel reduction in the larger areas.
- Use chippers in residential areas and roadside brushing projects. This method is quicker than burning, and reduces the smoke irritants in the air.
- Encourage the local landowner to do preventative maintenance by cleaning their property of the excess fuels, limbing trees, and developing greenbelts as described in PRC 4290.
- Use CDF Tulare Unit, Forest Service, and BLM inspectors to continue to insure PRC 4291 compliance.
- Utilize local Fire Safe Councils and other local entities to educate homeowners on how they can create a defensible space. This can be accomplished through demonstration projects.
- Use the local newspapers and media to inform the public on fire safety and upcoming events.
- Utilize CDF’s Team Teaching program and VIP's to teach fire safety in the local schools and at community events.
- Maintain our massive pre-suppression project inventory. These mainly consist of suppression tanks, fire control roads, and fire safe areas. Maintaining existing infrastructure should be the first priority, before development of new projects occurs.

Tulare County Fire Safe Council

The Tulare County Fire Safe Council has been operating in Tulare County since 1998. They are organized mainly to produce literature on fire safety, community protection, evacuation guides, and speak at public events. This organization is currently in the process of reorganizing to be able to effectively accomplish fuel reduction and fire safety projects by affiliating with a non profit organization to be able to obtain grant funding.

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Camp Nelson Fire Safe Demonstration Project being maintained by staff from the Tulare County Fire Safe Council, CDF, Tulare County Fire, and the United States Forest Service.

Participants of the Tulare County Fire Safe Council include:

Army Corps of Engineers, Lake Kaweah

Army Corps of Engineers, Lake Success
Bureau of Land Management
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Doyle Springs Association
Friends of the Tule River
Jonathan Wagy
Hartland Christian Camp
Hartland Homeowners Association
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Pacific Gas and Electric
Ponderosa Homeowners/ Upper Tule Association
San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District
Sequoia and Kings National Park
Sequoia Crest Property Owners Association
Society of American Foresters, S. San Joaquin Chapter
Southern California Edison
Sugarloaf Homeowners Association
Tulare County Board of Supervisors
Tulare County Cattlemen's Association
Tulare County Farm Bureau
Tulare County Resources Conservation District
Tule River Indian Reservation
Upper Tule Association
United States Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest
Wilsonia Cabin Owners

Sequoia Fire Safe Council

The Sequoia Fire Safe Council was established in June of 2005 to facilitate fuels treatment and large vegetation management projects. Their goal is to obtain funding and treat fuels. They are currently working under Tulare County Resource Conservation Districts non profit status pending their own 501 (c) 3. Projects are currently being developed in the Highway 245 area west of Badger, with more being developed in the immediate future.

Participants in the Sequoia Fire Safe Council include:

Bobby Kamansky
Brent Huntington, D-K Ranch
California Department of Forestry
Carri Diaz
David Witt
Elizabeth Palmer
Everett Welch
Jim Burr
Jim Sullins
Joe Williams
Joel Hayden
John Shannon
John Vincent Jr., Sequoia Ranch
Kyle Loveall, Elliott Land & Cattle Co.
Megan Bidart
National Park Service, Sequoia / Kings National Park
Ron Frazier
Southern California Edison
Tom Daly,
Tulare County Cattlemen's Association
UC Cooperative Extension
United States Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest
Warren Hutchings

Assets at Risk

Protecting our local assets remains a concern whether they are man-made such as our communities, or natural like the giant sequoia redwood trees. One way to protect our assets is to plan projects where our fire occurrences are high and the reasons for these starts are known. Tulare Unit maintains a GPS coordinate (lat. & long.) for all fire ignitions, and maps fires that burn 10 acres of timber, 50 acres of brush, 300 acres of grass, three or more structures, or cause more than $300,000 damage in the SRA protection area . The waypoints and track files are collected and used to create a data layer. At the end of each calendar year SRA ignition points and shape files are used to maintain accurate fire history and ignition location. Historically our fire starts occurred along the Highway 198 corridor and Highway 190 corridor. The GIS data collected is beneficial to determine specific fire cause locations and can direct prevention / education efforts to match historic ignitions.

Flooding/ Soil Erosion

Another concern in the event of a large and devastating fire such as the Mc Nalley and Manter Fires is the aftermath. Analysis of the topsoil after these types of large fires shows a transformation from good topsoil to a hydrophobic soil. Hydrophobic soil happens when a large fire consumes the brush that has a natural protective wax on the leaves, leaving a waxy residue on the ground. The waxy residue left on the ground can be approximately 2” to 3” in depth and prevents the soil from absorbing moisture. This in turn creates flooding, mudslides and threatens other assets such as animal habitat, fisheries, and our communities. Extensive soil erosion can occur and replace our water supplies with silt, mud, and rocks. Disturbing the top soil is a good way to disperse the waxy buildup and allow moisture to penetrate the soil. After the fire has passed, timber salvage operations is one way to reduce the fuel loading, help restore the land, and disperse the hydrophobic soil.

Timber

Timber is another important asset in Tulare County, especially to the small community of Terra Bella. Home to the Sierra Forest Products, this is one of the few major sawmills left in California. Logging has been a major part of Tulare County since the late 1880’s. Redwood, pine, cedar, and oak have been sawed and lumbered to help supply the nation’s lumber needs.

Fire History

Generally Tulare Unit’s Fire History consists of several small fires and on a rare occasion, a large and damaging fire. Tulare Units last large and damaging fires were the Kaweah fire (1996) and the Case Mt. fire (1987). From that time period to now it should be noted that Sequoia / Kings National Park had the Buckeye Fire (1988), and Sequoia National Forest had the Stormy Complex (1990), the Manter Fire (2000),
Mc Nalley Fire (2002), and the Deep Fire (2004) which were all considered large and damaging fires.

In 2004 the Tulare Unit had four fires that were considered large and damaging. This was about average with most of the fires occurring in grass covered rangeland. The Deep Fire occurred on the Sequoia National Forest directly adjacent to State Responsibility Area land and the Mountain Home Demonstration Forest. Secondary containment lines were created on the State Forest but the fire did not actually burn in MHDSF.

Deep Fire, 2004

Deep Fire suppression resources staged at the Methuselah campground,
Mt. Home State Forest, 2005

Fuels
The fuels in Tulare County range from light grasses in the western end of the county, to giant redwoods in the center portion of the county, to a high desert on the eastern end of the county. Most of the SRA lands protected by CDF are grasslands, type four brush, and areas of timber starting around the 4,000' elevation
(see Fuels Map in Appendix). Prescribe fire has been a useful tool in reducing the accumulation of fuels in the Unit. There is one burn well into the planning process moving towards implementation, and we are looking into re-treatment of projects that we have completed in the past.

Weather
The weather during the fire season is generally hot, with temperatures between 95°-103°, humidity in the low 20s and a light wind about 3-5 mph from the NW. The light wind and somewhat higher humidity has helped in suppressing fires in the unit. The topography of the land is generally flat to the west and becomes steep very quickly from the center of the county to the east. See Fire Weather Map in Appendix.